

in the mirror. On Super Bowl Sunday and in the middle of the worst food budget crisis in a generation, the President himself cut an ad, warning that the real problem in American families' pantries was bags of potato chips with fewer chips inside. President Biden calls shrinkflation a rip-off, but the American people know the real rip-off is the historic inflation that has shrunk their paychecks and forced them to make tough choices about tomorrow and get through today. In fact, they say so repeatedly. The only question at this point is when Washington Democrats will start listening.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Illinois.

SOUTH AFRICA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, over the recess that just concluded, I had a chance to visit South Africa for an Aspen Institute conference to discuss the future of that continent. With so much of the world's attention on Ukraine, as it should be, and the Middle East, as it should be, we often forget the importance of this dynamic and challenging African continent, with nearly one out of five of the world's population—a percentage that will increase greatly this century.

There were so many different aspects we discussed and so many different opportunities. The thing that I came away with was the clear understanding—the Chinese understand this, as they see a future in Africa that we don't see, and they are investing dramatically in Africa's future—that if the United States and other Western nations ignore this reality, the Africa of tomorrow will be a lot different than the one today and may not be our friend as we want them to be.

During my time in Congress, I have tried to advance several efforts to foster more engagement in Africa, including support for funding to address AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria through the Global Fund and PEPFAR, as well as mobility programs and clean water and sanitation. In fact, Chicago-based World Bicycle Relief is helping lead some of the most innovative mobility programs that help get kids to school and healthcare workers to visit rural, remote areas.

I didn't agree with President George W. Bush on many things, but I want to give him credit for making the United States a leader in stemming the HIV/AIDS pandemic in some of the poorest parts of the world, including Africa.

It was just over 20 years ago that nearly 30 million Africans were infected with HIV/AIDS—30 million. They had almost no access to treatment. President George W. Bush's response was known as PEPFAR, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. It worked. PEPFAR and its companion effort, the Global Fund, dramatically curtailed the AIDS epidemic ravaging many parts of the world, including much of Africa, saving more than 25 million lives. These programs provide retroviral drugs for

those with AIDS, allowing them to live productive lives and to prevent the spread of disease through childbirth.

Some might have forgotten just how devastating AIDS hit many parts of the world, killing more than 2 million people globally each year and leaving 14 million orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa. I was reminded on my trip just how devastating AIDS was to southern Africa. Take Malawi, where the PEPFAR and Global Fund programs have increased the number of Malawians living with AIDS, on treatment, from 5 percent to 95 percent—survivors.

So it is bewildering to me—I can't understand this—how we are presently engaged in a political debate on Capitol Hill as to whether PEPFAR is a good program. Extremists are arguing that we shouldn't reauthorize this historic, lifesaving program when people are still dependent on these drugs to survive from day to day and week to week.

Last year, President Bush—junior in this situation—wrote an op-ed, urging PEPFAR reauthorization, in the Washington Post in which he quoted his late speechwriter and PEPFAR champion, Michael Gerson, as follows:

What definition of pro-life does not include saving millions of lives from preventable disease and death?

Bush went on to note:

We are on the verge of ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic. To abandon our commitment now would forfeit two decades of unimaginable progress and raise further questions about the worth of America's word.

I agree.

I call on my Republican friends to help authorize this historic, bipartisan, lifesaving effort without further delay.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Madam President, on a different topic, just before our recent recess, the Senate overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan aid package, notably to help Ukraine defend itself against Russia.

Ukraine has fought a heroic, historic, significant battle to defend its independence and democracy, thwarting a full-scale Russian invasion 2 years ago and showing the world how you stand up to a bully like Vladimir Putin. In fact, its resistance to Russia has major security impacts and benefits for our larger Western security.

But as everyone in Congress knows, Ukraine urgently needs more weapons and assistance, and needs it now. Our European allies approved their aid earlier this month, but despite European and U.S. Senate support, many almost unbelievable events have occurred over the past few weeks that endanger Ukrainians' chance of success and global security.

Closest to home, the House of Representatives has remained passive, detached, and silent for the past 2 weeks on the Senate-passed national security supplemental bill, with its leadership subservient to Donald Trump, who in turn is just enamored—a real bromance—with Vladimir Putin.

Last week, true to form, former President Trump went so far as to even say he would encourage Russia to attack fellow NATO members. Can you imagine anyone responsibly making that suggestion? I can't.

Furthermore, on the global stage, public reports have suggested that Putin is thinking of putting some kind of nuclear weapon in space. For all those who want to embrace Putin as part of our future, look at the reality of the situation in Ukraine and in outer space.

Amidst all of this, Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny died in a Russian gulag prison just before a sham election in which Putin is afraid of any real competition. In response to this tragedy, Trump sank to a new low, shamefully comparing Navalny's death to his own self-inflicted legal problems.

Is there anyone who doesn't see that Putin is gloating at this perceived impunity and relishing in his congressional apologists?

Why in the world would we play into Donald Trump's delusions? Why would Trump-beholden Republicans fawn over Putin, a wanted war criminal responsible for kidnapping—kidnapping—20,000 Ukrainian children and taking them into Russia—a stunning number that is likely to go higher?

Or imagine the scene shared by my colleague from Hawaii, that of Ukrainian soldiers on the frontlines checking their phones to see whether House Republicans passed our Ukraine aid package. They were watching our votes on the floor of the U.S. Senate while they were risking their lives in the battle against Putin. These soldiers are fighting with their lives for democracy and security in Europe, while House Republicans do nothing.

It is time for the House Republicans to pass this urgently needed aid package without further delay.

(The remarks of Mr. DURBIN pertaining to the introduction of S. 3804 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I am honored to rise today on the last couple of days of Black History Month to talk about a program we have had since 2007 in our office. This is a time for us to reflect, in our State, upon the Black Pennsylvanians who have led our communities in years past and who continue to honor us with the trailblazing work that they do throughout their communities.

This year, I again have the privilege of honoring several Pennsylvanians as part of my Senate office's Black History Month celebration. Our honorees this year are Edgar and Barbara Farmer, who reside in State College, PA; Loretta Claiborne of York, PA; Donta Green of Pittsburgh, PA; and Lurline Jones of Philadelphia, PA.

The theme of this year's celebration is "The Voices Empowering Generational Change." I think all of us would agree that change comes with great difficulty, and we know that when we honor these individuals, we honor Pennsylvanians, year after year, who have demonstrated the courage that has enabled others to follow them and to continue their work for change. It is especially important this year that we honor those with the courage to take that first difficult step to create change.

This Black History Month, I am grateful for the opportunity to pay tribute to several trailblazing Pennsylvanians who sparked change and, by doing that, make it possible for later generations to pursue that same powerful change. So I will just give a brief biographical sketch of each of our honorees for the Senate to hear about.

Loretta Claiborne, as I mentioned, is from York, PA. Loretta is a lifelong resident of York. She is a speaker, an athlete, and, above all, an advocate for people with disabilities. She was born in the middle of seven children to a low-income, single-parent family. She was partially blind and with an intellectual disability at her birth. She was unable to speak or run until she was 4 years old. But—you know what—since that age, she hasn't stopped running, having completed 26 marathons—that is 26 more than I have completed—twice placing her in the top 100 women in the Boston Marathon. She has won dozens of medals at the Special Olympics World Summer Games. She introduced President Clinton at the 1995 Special Olympics Summer Games. Loretta has been inducted into the Women in Sports Hall of Fame and the Special Olympics Pennsylvania Hall of Fame.

Loretta is a lifelong learner, communicating in four languages, including American Sign Language, and has received honorary doctoral degrees from Villanova University, Quinnipiac University, and York College—two of those three institutions in Pennsylvania.

More than a learner, Loretta is also a teacher, having given a TED talk on intellectual disabilities and speaking frequently about her story, including twice on the Oprah Winfrey Show.

She tells her story not to promote herself but to teach others that people with disabilities are equal to others. Here is something she said:

I figured if my story could change a person's mind about another person, or especially a child's mind about another child, then it was the right thing to do.

Loretta's story is all the more remarkable given that she was born at a

time when a person with a disability was likely to be placed in an institution. Due to her efforts and others like her, people with disabilities today go to school, they go to work, and they are members of sports teams around the world.

Loretta is a trailblazer for disability civil rights, working to ensure that people with disabilities can grow, live, and continue to contribute to their communities as full members, sharing their own extraordinary gifts.

Our second honoree is Donta Green, from Pittsburgh. He is a mentor, coach, and widely respected community leader in Pittsburgh who brings excellence to all that he does. He is among the next generation of community leaders helping young men to reach for the future and working to empower others to take the first steps toward a better life.

As a coach for the Westinghouse Bulldogs, Donta took over a struggling football program and built it into a winner, even taking the Bulldogs to the State title game in both 2022 and 2023. As a coach, he is not just the architect of a football program but a mold and teacher of young men, helping them not only achieve on the field but also to translate their success off the field as well.

Donta also serves as the executive director of the Trade Institute of Pittsburgh—known by the acronym T-I-P, or TIP—which seeks to empower men and women with significant barriers to employment by providing them skills training and opportunities for career advancement. The Training Institute of Pittsburgh offers tuition-free trade programs such as masonry and carpentry, as well as related life skills such as financial and math literacy, resume and interview coaching, driver's license prep, and one-on-one life coaching.

Many of the students at TIP are formerly incarcerated individuals trying to make the difficult transition to life after prison. TIP does remarkable work helping them to overcome the societal biases and barriers that many of these Americans face. So many of these individuals are successful, achieving an employment rate of 94 percent among individuals who complete the program.

TIP also runs a workforce housing program that matches homeless students with a Training Institute of Pittsburgh alum who will work one-on-one with them until their lives and income are ready for independent living.

Our third honoree is Lurline Jones. Lurline is yet another coach or involved in athletics, as several of our honorees are. Lurline is from Philadelphia, as I mentioned. She is a teacher, a mentor, and a basketball coach with more than five decades of coaching experience within the school district of Philadelphia, where she recently retired as the head basketball coach of the Martin Luther King High School. Since her coaching career began, more than 300 of Lurline's student athletes

have gone on to college on athletic scholarships, and 3 have played in the WNBA.

Lurline also cofounded the Developmental Basketball League, a nonprofit that helps girls and boys hone their fundamental basketball skills, and she has been doing this for nearly 50 years.

As impressive as her coaching career has been, Lurline is the first to tell you that it is not just about sports. "These kids are my kids," she says. "They know I'm teaching them more than how to play basketball."

Lurline credits her mother, Mary Nixon, a domestic worker who grew up on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, for instilling in her the spirit of an activist. Her mother raised Lurline in the Brewerytown section of North Philadelphia.

After leaving home for Morgan State College in Baltimore, which is now known as Morgan State University, Lurline Jones experienced legal segregation for the first time, spurring her to get involved in the civil rights movement, which landed her and hundreds of other Morgan students at that time in jail after protesting the segregation policy at a nearby movie theater.

Lurline was involved in fighting against gender disparities in athletics as well. As a high school player at Philadelphia's William Penn High School for Girls, she was denied a chance to play varsity basketball because the school did not field a team, spurring her to become a lifelong advocate for the rights of women athletes.

At the age of 80, Lurline's energy and enthusiasm are as strong as ever. Here is what she says:

I want to give these kids a chance to succeed in life. I feel extremely blessed to still have the opportunity to make an impact and pay it forward.

Finally, Madam President, our fourth and fifth honorees are Edgar and Barbara Farmer, as I mentioned, from State College, PA, the home of Penn State. Edgar and Barbara are longtime educators and community pillars in the State College community. They fought for years for progress on issues such as education and diversity.

Barbara Farmer is a retired educator who taught business classes in North Carolina and Virginia before serving as the first Black principal in the State College Area School District. After 40 years as an educator, Barbara became director of multicultural affairs at the Penn State College of Information Sciences and Technology. She also found time to volunteer and to serve her community outside of work, serving on the boards of Centre County United Way and the Women's Resource Center, while also chairing the State College Borough's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Plaza Committee.

Edgar is a retired U.S. Army veteran who served in Vietnam, attended Penn State in the mid-1970s, and worked in higher education in North Carolina for

almost two decades. In 1996, he returned to Penn State as a professor of workforce education and development.

Prior to retirement, Edgar Farmer worked in a number of roles, including head of Learning and Performance Systems and professor-in-charge of the Workforce Education and Development Program.

Barbara and Edgar Farmer have long shared their wisdom and expertise outside the classroom, coauthoring the two books: the first, "Diversity in America: Visions of the Future," and the second, "Leading with Character."

They are leading contributors to local news outlets on the issues of education and diversity. In 2017, they served on Penn State's Policing People of Color Task Force and have long been involved in diversity issues in the Borough of State College.

Barbara and Edgar are also committed philanthropists, establishing and contributing to a number of funds and scholarships at Penn State, as well as Hampton University and Norfolk State University, where Barbara and Edgar received their undergraduate degrees.

Last November, as honorees of Penn State's annual Renaissance Fund celebration, Barbara and Edgar helped to raise nearly \$200,000 for scholarships for students with financial needs. Regarding that event, Barbara summed up their approach to service, saying:

All we have done and all we hope to continue doing is part of the charge that we have been given as our life's task. Supporting one another and taking care of one another make the world and our community a better place.

No one could say it better than Barbara did.

So, once again, it is a privilege to be able to honor these remarkable Pennsylvanians and to speak briefly about their accomplishments here on the Senate floor.

Loretta Claiborne, Donta Green, Lurline Jones, and Edgar and Barbara Farmer are each, in their own right, individually and collectively, truly inspirational figures and leaders who have brought about remarkable change through their own efforts through their courage but who will continue to empower generational change, inspiring others to also fight for the change that we need across our commonwealth and our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

NOMINATION OF JULIE SU

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, this week, the HELP Committee—the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee—will be holding a vote on the renomination of Julie Su for Secretary of Labor. At the direction of the chair, this committee vote is taking place behind closed doors, without a public hearing, and with no opportunity to hear from Ms. Su directly.

It is important to note that the committee is voting on Ms. Su's nomination

for the second time. Her first nomination failed and was returned to the White House after the majority leader declined to give her a vote on the Senate floor when it was clear that based upon bipartisan opposition, she would not be confirmed.

During Ms. Su's first nomination hearing for the Secretary of Labor last April, the committee addressed a variety of concerns with her past record in California and her tenure at the Department of Labor.

Since then, concerns over her leadership at the Department of Labor have grown, and they warrant further review by the committee.

Earlier this month, I sent a formal request to the HELP Committee chair to hold a public hearing on Ms. Su's second nomination so members of the committee can discuss concerns directly with Ms. Su. Unfortunately, the chair denied our request and, instead, is holding a vote on Ms. Su's nomination behind closed doors, without a full public hearing. This is unacceptable.

It has been almost a year since Ms. Su's nomination hearing. It is important that we examine the many issues that have arisen since then and get an explanation over those serious concerns in her year of being an Acting Secretary.

She has built a troubling record as the Acting DOL Secretary, implementing policies that promote large labor unions at the expense of workers' freedoms and economic growth.

Currently, Ms. Su is overseeing the implementation of DOL's worker classification rule, dismantling the gig economy, and jeopardizing the ability of 27 million Americans who choose to work as independent contractors.

Additionally, the Department of Labor has also proposed a new overtime rule, dramatically increasing the overtime pay threshold by 55 percent, which will decrease job opportunities and raise prices for the American family.

The Department of Labor has also released a new policy that allows an outside union official to influence a workplace inspection even when that workplace is not unionized. The union is not there, but they can influence the workplace inspection.

These are all terribly problematic actions taken by an Acting Secretary who lacks Senate confirmation. The Biden administration's attempt to circumvent the advice and consent provision of the Constitution by leveraging Ms. Su's previous position as Deputy Secretary brings these actions into legal question. And, by the way, there are also serious concerns about Ms. Su's ability to manage the Department of Labor.

Under her leadership, there has been a 50-percent increase in illegal child labor since 2022. There are alarming reports that senior DOL officials repeatedly ignored warnings, downplaying the exploitation of migrant children for cheap labor. When the committee

asked Ms. Su to explain DOL's failure to address child labor violations, she repeatedly failed to comply with congressional oversight.

Additionally, DOL has struggled to process H-2B guest worker visas, crucial for employers that experience workforce shortages based on the season. These delays are already having significant impact on these employers and, again, leading to rising prices on families.

The American people deserve a competent Secretary at the Department of Labor. As outlined in the Constitution, the Senate is still supposed to vote on whether to confirm Ms. Su. HELP Committee members need the ability—the opportunity—to raise their concerns to Ms. Su and get answers.

Nomination hearings are not just checking a box; they are a crucial part of the process. Every Senator needs the information revealed in hearings to evaluate and decide how they will vote on a nomination.

The chair's decision to not hold a public hearing on Ms. Su is unacceptable, shows a lack of transparency from the majority, and undermines the committee's constitutional duty to advise and consent on Presidential nominees.

No one is above accountability, especially an unconfirmed yet acting Cabinet-level nominee with massive influence over our Nation's economy.

As ranking member of the HELP Committee, I will continue to lead Senate Republicans in holding Ms. Su accountable. We need to ensure that she fairly enforces our Nation's labor laws.

With that, I yield the floor.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the scheduled rollcall vote begin now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 468, Jacqueline Becerra, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, Mazie Hirono, Tina Smith, Gary C. Peters, Amy Klobuchar, Raphael G. Warnock, Catherine Cortez Masto, Alex Padilla, Mark R. Warner, Tim Kaine, Sheldon Whitehouse, Martin Heinrich, Christopher A. Coons, Margaret Wood Hassan, Peter Welch.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Jacqueline Becerra, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida, shall be brought to a close?